



July 17, 2020

Dear Chair Michlewitz, Vice-Chair Garlick, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

Black lives are under attack in our country and our commonwealth. This includes the life of Black immigrants from Brazil, Haiti, Cape Verde, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica. Each of these is among the top 15 home countries for undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts. We thank you for your leadership for taking up S.2820, *An Act to reform police standards and shift resources to build a more equitable, fair and just commonwealth that values Black lives and communities of color*. We do have one important suggestion to continue the work of dismantling systemic racism in all its forms.

Include language in the reforming police standards legislation that would grant driver's licenses to immigrants without status. We know that for Black immigrants, over-policing has grave consequences as families and communities are torn apart through detention and deportation. We know that for law enforcement this addition would promote trust between communities they serve and allow for officers to consistently identify who is behind the wheel.

There is no doubt that the socially damaging and unsafe linkage of driving privileges to immigration status is a part of the systemic racism that continues to hold back Black communities. There is also no question that law enforcement understands that tested and insured drivers make the roads safer for everyone. That's why the Massachusetts Major City Chiefs of Police Association, several District Attorneys, sheriffs, and individual police Chiefs have endorsed giving driving licenses to immigrants without status. Mobility is necessary.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of immigrants without status has been deemed essential. Through the reopening, it is only appropriate that the dignity of their lives also be deemed essential. Whether it is working in healthcare, construction, or the food supply chain, we need to protect the health and safety of immigrants who live and work in every corner of our Commonwealth.

Further, granting licenses to undocumented drivers could generate about \$6 million in revenues from license fees, inspections, and registration within the first three years of implementation. It also could generate \$5 million per year in state revenue through motor fuel taxes. Not only will this addition improve community well-being, it will also bring revenue to the state and encourage economic activity through increased mobility.

The time is now to offer the essential tool of mobility to immigrants who are part of our economic fabric. As we prepare for the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must learn the lessons from the first. Where there is a risk to one, there is a risk to all.

Signed,

Monique Ching, Policy Analyst

Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center